

AUGUST 1, 1978

NATIONAL URBAN COALITION REPORT

ANNCR:

THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION RELEASED A REPORT IN WASHINGTON (MONDAY, JULY 31) ON THE RESULTS OF A TWO-YEAR STUDY OF FORTY-FOUR AMERICAN CITIES. THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION IS A PRIVATE GROUP WHICH REPRESENTS CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED ABOUT CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY'S URBAN AREAS. GARY EDQUIST HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

IN THE COLISEUM SQUARE AREA OF NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA A RUN-DOWN HOUSE IN NEED OF REPAIR SOLD FOR FORTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS. THAT SAME HOUSE AFTER RENOVATION SOLD FOR ONE-HUNDRED-FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. IN THE OLD MINT HILL SECTION OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, RENOVATED HOUSES SELL FOR AS MUCH AS A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS. THOSE HOUSES BEFORE REPAIR COULD BE BOUGHT FOR FORTY TO FIFTY-THOUSAND DOLLARS. IN THE FORTY-FOUR CITIES SURVEYED BY THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION, THE PATTERN IS MUCH THE SAME; THERE IS A RENAISSANCE OF AMERICAN INNER CITIES. AREAS THAT FOR LONG YEARS HAD BEEN NEGLECTED AND HAD FALLEN INTO DISREPAIR ARE SUDDENLY FASHIONABLE AS PEOPLE BUY AND RESTORE THE OLD HOUSES. ACCORDING TO COALITION PRESIDENT CARL HOLMAN, THE MIDDLE CLASS IS MOVING BACK INTO THE CITIES, BUT HE ADDS, FOR ALL THE GOOD THERE IS A BAD SIDE EFFECT.

THE DISTURBING NEWS IS THAT AS PEOPLE BUY THE OLD HOMES AND APARTMENTS, ALL TOO OFTEN THE LONG-TIME RESIDENTS OF THOSE AREAS, THE POOR, THE ELDERLY, OR RACIAL MINORITIES ARE FORCED TO MOVE AND LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING. ACCORDING TO MISTER HOLMAN, "IF YOU ARE AN ELDERLY, POOR, WORKING CLASS

RENTER OR HOMEOWNER WHO LIVES IN AN AREA UNDERGOING REHABILITATION OR IN A SUDDENLY FASHIONABLE NEIGHBORHOOD, YOU ARE A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR DISPLACEMENT."

MISTER HOLAMN SAID THERE IS A NEW GENERATION OF "URBAN PIONEERS," AS HE CALLED THEM, WHO ARE CHOOSING TO LIVE IN CITIES. THESE URBAN PIONEERS ARE GENERALLY YOUNG, WORK AT WELL-PAYING JOBS, AND REPRESENT BOTH SINGLE PEOPLE AS WELL AS MARRIED COUPLES WITHOUT CHILDREN.

(OPT) FOR MANY OF THESE PEOPLE THE ATTRACTIONS OF BIG CITY LIFE ARE COMPELLING: BEING CLOSE TO CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT LIFE, AND SAVING ENERGY AND TIME BY AVOIDING THE LONG, DREARY COMMUTE FROM THE SUBURBS. (END OPT) HOUSING COSTS HAVE RISEN DRAMATICALLY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND OFTEN THE DILAPIDATED INNER CITIES OFFER HOUSING BARGAINS FOR THOSE WILLING TO INVEST THE TIME AND MONEY IN RESTORATION AND RENOVATION. BUT THE IRONY IS THAT AS THESE URBAN PIONEERS REDISCOVER CITY LIFE IT DRIVES UP THE COST OF HOUSING, FORCING OUT THOSE LIVING ON LOW OR FIXED INCOMES, THE ELDERLY AND POOR... THE PEOPLE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD TO PAY THE HIGH PRICES.

CARL HOLMAN WARNS IN HIS NATIONAL URBAN COALITION REPORT THAT THERE IS RISING HOSTILITY AND TENSION BETWEEN THE LONG-TIME RESIDENTS AND THE NEW CITY DWELLERS. ACCORDING TO THE COALITION REPORT, THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM IS NOT TO HALT INNER CITY RESTORATION BUT TO GO ABOUT IT MORE INTELLIGENTLY.

THE GOVERNMENT, SAYS THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION, SHOULD DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS TO AID LOW INCOME CITY RESIDENT. HOME OWNERS SHOULD BE GIVEN SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR LOANS FOR HOUSING REHABILITATION, AND THERE MUST, SAYS THE CAALITION BE IMPROVED LEGISLATION TO PROTECT THE HOUSING RIGHTS OF THE ELDERLY

AND POOR. THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION SAYS THAT SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO REBUILD THE CITIES WILL DEPEND LARGELY ON THE HARD WORK OF CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE COMMUNITIES WHICH ARE RACIAL CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE.

RK/PY